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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 003000

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND EB/TPP/BTA/ANA GOODMAN AND WICKMAN
STATE PASS USTR ELENA BRYAN AND GREG HICKS
USDOC FOR 4431/MAC/AP/OPB/VLC/HPPHO
USAID FOR ANE AND GH (DCAROLL, SCLEMENTS AND PCHAPLIN)
STATE ALSO PASS HHS/OGHA (EELVANDER)
ROME FOR FAO

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KIPR](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [VM](#) [AFLU](#) [WTO](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM SEEKS TO MAKE TAMIFLU OR HUMAN VACCINE

SENSITIVE - DO NOT POST ON INTERNET

[1](#)1. Action Request: See paragraph 8.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: Vietnamese Minister of Health Tran Thi Chung Chien unexpectedly joined a November 8 meeting between the Ambassador and Vice Foreign Minister Le Cong Phung on WTO and bilateral issues. Madame Chien asked for U.S. assistance in persuading Roche to give Vietnam a license to produce Tamiflu, noting that Vietnam was prepared to resort to compulsory licensing unless Roche agreed. Vice Foreign Minister Phung appealed for U.S. help in obtaining Tamiflu supplies for this year's flu season. Chien also asked for U.S. help in finding a company to work with Vietnam to produce a human vaccine against Avian Influenza (AI) and promised that Vietnam's National Preparedness Plan would be published next week. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ambassador arrived at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a meeting with Vice Minister Le Cong Phung to discuss WTO accession and bilateral affairs only to discover that Vietnamese Minister of Health Tran Thi Chung Chien had invited herself to join the meeting. The Minister arrived late, after discussion of the WTO and other issues (septsels). After pleasantries about HHS Secretary Leavitt's visit, Madame Chien said that she wanted to discuss two issues: first, obtaining a license to produce Tamiflu, and second, help in production of a human vaccine.

Tamiflu Or a License to Make It

[1](#)4. (SBU) The Minister said that she had met November 7 with the Director of Roche's Asia and Pacific Department, who was in Vietnam for a seminar, about obtaining adequate supplies of Tamiflu or a license to produce Tamiflu in Vietnam. Vietnam estimates that in the event of a pandemic, 8.2 million Vietnamese (about a tenth of the population) could fall ill. Treatment calls for ten doses of Tamiflu, so Vietnam asked Roche to supply 82 million doses. However, Roche said it could supply only small amounts immediately and not the full amount until August 2006. The Vietnamese side proposed that Roche supply Vietnam with Tamiflu in powder form and Vietnam would turn it into tablets and package it. According to the Minister, Roche declined to license Tamiflu production; however, Roche and Vietnam signed a memorandum, although she did not respond to the Ambassador's request for a copy. Chien said that she had just come from a meeting with EU representatives on the same issue, but they "had not been cooperative." As a result, Vietnam is considering compulsory licensing of Tamiflu. Vice Minister Phung added that a pandemic could break out before August 2006 and asked that the United States help Vietnam to obtain adequate supplies of Tamiflu and to obtain the right and technical ability to manufacture Tamiflu.

[1](#)5. (SBU) The Ambassador promised to convey the GVN requests to Washington. He noted that the supply of Tamiflu is insufficient worldwide, including in the United States. There are ongoing discussions with the WHO and many countries about stockpiling and other measures. Press reports, he pointed out, say that Roche believes that production of Tamiflu is technically difficult for a third party to set up in a short time. The need for quick action is obvious, the Ambassador added, noting press reports of another death in Vietnam. He asked the Minister to provide more details on Vietnam's discussions with Roche, including a copy of the MOU signed that day with Roche.

Human Vaccine: the U.S. Commitment

[1](#)6. (SBU) The Minister also asked for U.S. assistance in finding companies to help Vietnam produce a human vaccine against AI. She mentioned that Vietnam had talked with a French company that had vaccine technology. She pointed out that in the Letter of Intent that she and Secretary Leavitt

had signed in October, the United States had promised to help Vietnam with training for vaccination and production technology. She hoped that the U.S. side could accelerate production of a human vaccine as well as help upgrade two laboratories, one at the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Hanoi and the other at the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City. The Ambassador replied that implementation of the Letter of Intent was in process, but he understood the Minister's desire to accelerate the process. He noted the importance of letting the experts work out issues relating to production of both Tamiflu and human vaccine.

National Preparedness Plan

17. (SBU) The Ambassador asked when Vietnam's National Preparedness Plan would be published. The sooner it is published, the sooner donors can start to adjust their assistance programs. The Minister replied that the plan should be published this week. In accordance with this National Plan, the Government is organizing response exercises in three regions: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and the central region. She hoped that after the exercises, Vietnam would be able to improve its plans.

18. (SBU) Action requested: Post requests Department guidance on how to respond to the GVN requests listed in paragraphs 4 and 6.

MARINE